

## Chapter 1

I am tired. Exhausted, and frankly, just ready to get home, take a hot bath, and put my feet up.

If it wasn't for the contacts I had made, this business trip would have been nothing but a waste of time, money, and resources. Why my soon-to-be business partner, a.k.a. my ancé, Adam Rivers, asked me to take his place on the trip is beyond me.

I met with our potential new client, Bradley Gray, Monday afternoon and again yesterday, and we hit it off. He was extremely handsome, with dark green eyes and chestnut-colored hair, and built. Like my goodness, I had to wipe the gurative drool away. He was that hot! During our initial introduction, he had run his eyes up and down my body, sending a thrill to the center of my being. When his eyes met mine, the intensity of his gaze left me trembling.

"It is most certainly my pleasure to me you, Ms. Fredericks. Or may I call you Anna?" The honeyed timber of his voice, in addition to the warm pressure of his hand when he shook my hand in greeting, was enough to set my heart racing. An image of him and I lost in a passionate embrace formed in my mind. The spit dried in my mouth, making it dicult to swallow.

Our afternoon meeting extended into a dinner at an upscale restaurant. Our conversation went from strictly business to a 'get to know you personally' one. I was totally charmed by this man. "So, you're really engaged to be married?" His question surprised me. "Engaged to Adam Rivers, your business associate?"

"I am." My response was luke warm at best. At this moment, I was wondering what I had been thinking when I agreed to date, and then marry Adam. Because he couldn't hold a candle to Bradley Gray. Not in looks, personality, intelligence, and certainly not s\*x appeal.

Bradley escorted me back to my hotel when the evening was at an end. Saying goodnight, he leaned forward and placed a kiss on my cheek. If I hadn't been engaged to Adam, I think I would have turned just enough for our lips to meet. Our meetings on Tuesday were very productive, and I was fairly certain Fredericks Design Co would be awarded the design and renovation contract for the Gray Industries oce building.

I had gotten the impression that Bradley would have pursued me if I hadn't already been engaged. Honestly, in the past month or so, I have been questioning my decision to marry Adam Rivers. I had a lot of self-reaction to do regarding that decision and if this was what I truly wanted for my life.

I had only been up for half an hour early this morning when Bradley called and advised me that, due to personal reasons, he was canceling the rest of our meetings, suggesting we reschedule at a later date. That allowed me to check out of my hotel and catch an early ight, bringing me home three days early.

Home to the house I bought six months ago. This was going to be my marital home. For now, I was the only one living here. Adam had wanted to move in right away, but I was adamant that he waited until we were husband and wife. He did have the code for the front door's digital lock pad, but so far, that was the extent of his access to the house.

I admit, I am 'old-fashioned' in my ideas about love, marriage, and s\*x. But seeing I was raised by my very proper, straight-laced grandparents, what could you expect? The 'no s\*x until marriage' rule was a sore point with Adam, but I wasn't willing to set aside my morals for a romp in the hay. Or that's the story I was going with.

He had pressured me quite hard about it until I told him he either accepted that was the way it was going to be, or we would break up and go our separate ways. His initial reaction to this had raised my hackles and red ags. I'm not sure why I ignored those red ags at the time, but increasingly, the ags were piling up.

I was also beginning to wonder if my reluctance to consummate our physical relationship had more to do with me, realizing I wasn't truly in love with Adam.

Because, let me tell you, if Bradley Gray had been the one asking, I don't think I would have been able to say no. I felt I had a much deeper connection with Bradley after only two days than I ever did with Adam after knowing him for almost 3 years. So yeah, I think I am going to break it off with Adam.

I parked my car around the corner as the driveway was blocked by a red Lexus RX350. Walking back to our house along the sidewalk, I looked closely at the vehicle. The license plate showed the car belonging to my half-sister, Fiona.

What the hell was she doing here? It's the middle of the workday for heaven's sake. She should be at the oce, not here at my home. Not only that, where was she? She shouldn't be in the house as the only people who had the code for the door lock were me and Adam.

My gut was telling me that something was off. So, I used my key and opened the man-door of the attached garage to enter the house. The door from the garage to the house wasn't locked, so that made my entry easier. I kicked off my shoes in the garage and tiptoed into the house.

The kitchen was a freaking mess. What the hell? The house was spotless when I left Monday morning. The thing that caught my eye was the wine glasses left on the counter. One of them had bright red lipstick stains on it. The same bright red as my half-sister's favorite lipstick.

Looking around the open-concept living area, I saw no trace of anyone, other than a pair of black high heels that appeared to have been kicked off in a hurry. A mued sound from upstairs drew my attention. I placed my purse and keys on the console table by the door to the garage and quietly made my way up the carpeted stairs.

Following the noise, it led me in the direction of the master bedroom. The door was partially ajar, allowing me to see the reection in the dresser mirror. I pulled my cell phone from my suit coat jacket, opened the camera, and started to record. This close to the bedroom, the moans and groans coming from the two people on my bed were easily picked up by the audio on the phone.

"Oh, God, Adam! Just like that! Don't stop! Harder, yes! Yes, I'm coming!"screamed my sister as she was getting railed from behind by my ancé, Adam. As he continued to pound into her, his shout of "God, Fiona, I love you!" followed as he, too, climaxed with a shudder. Then they collapsed together, exhausted by their efforts.

"Son of a bitch." I thought to myself. "So, this is why I was asked to take his place on a business trip." I didn't know whether to clap at their performance or rush in with gurative guns blazing. My thoughts were interrupted by their post-coital murmurings.

"Adam, you're not really going to marry Anna, are you?" Fiona's voice pleaded.

"I don't want to, my love. But you know the marriage contract has been signed. If I don't go through with it, then the company will revert to sole ownership of Anna. If she were to nd out about us, then you and I would lose our jobs, our income, everything! It's only for a year. We just have to stay married for a year, then when she dies, I inherit everything. The business, the house, her vehicles will all be mine. We'll be set."

"So, you still plan on arranging an accident for her? Like Dad arranged for her mother?" Fiona questioned, her voice full of undisguised glee.

"Damn right I do. She disgusts me. Except for not being able to baby trap her, I am thankful she won't have s\*x with me. The thought of it makes me sick. Do you really think I would have pretended to love her if it wasn't for her wealth? I mean, twenty million dollars. Think of the life we can live with that kind of money." Adam chortled. "I still don't understand how your father didn't realize Anna's mother had named Anna as the sole beneficiary in her will. Didn't they ever talk?"

"I don't know. I suppose that by the time she wrote her will, Dad had already been in a relationship with my mother for years and didn't pay attention to Anna's mother at all. Thank God we are mather than Dad. Anna is so desperate for love that she didn't even read the full prenup." Fiona sneered in contempt.

"Well, she read enough to put in the indelity clause. If either of us cheats, and it can be proven, the marriage contract is null and void. That's why she can never nd out about us. Why do you think I have been asking her to take the lead on these business trips? It gives us time together, and she will never know. The house cleaning service always comes on the day before she gets back, so she never knows about us."

I quietly backed away and retraced my steps down the stairs, grabbed my purse and keys, and left via the door to the garage, then out to the street, and down the block to my car. I made sure to take photos showing my sister's vehicle in front of my house. I needed all the evidence I could get.

Once in my car, I drove to the apartment complex I owned, parked in the underground garage, and took the private elevator to the penthouse. I was thankful I had never told Adam or Fiona about this building, or this penthouse suite.

It was here that I kept all my important documents, locked in a safe in the study. It was here that I conducted all the business deals for my conglomerate. It was here I ran my multi-billion-dollar business empire.

An empire they knew nothing about.